

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VALLET 00295 01 OF 02 211518Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 IO-13 SIL-01 LAB-04 OMB-01
/102 W

-----107333 211552Z /45

R 211442Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7980
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USNATO
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VALLETTA 00295

E.O 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MT, US
SUBJECT: FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT CONTINUES

REF: VALLETTA 0230,

1. SUMMARY: NATIONALIST SHADOW MINISTER FOR COMMONWEALTH
AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS TABONE APPEALED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF A CONSENSUS ON MALTA'S FOREIGN POLICY IN PARLIAMENT ON
FEBRUARY 15. HE ASKED THE GOVERNMENT TO CLARIFY ITS
NEUTRALITY PROPOSALS, AND STRESSED THAT MALTA'S SECURITY
MUST BE GUARANTEED BY WESTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, AFTER
WHICH IT WOULD "DO NO HARM" TO ACQUIRE ADDITIONAL
GUARANTEES FROM ALGERIA AND LIBYA. P.M. MINTOFF RESPONDED
BY ASSERTING THAT ITALY AND FRANCE HAVE NOT GIVEN ANY
GUARANTEES BECAUSE THEY THOUGHT THAT THE US WANTS A BASE IN
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VALLET 00295 01 OF 02 211518Z

MALTA AND, BECAUSE OF THE OPPOSITION'S STATEMENTS, THE WEST
DOES NOT THINK THAT MALTA WILL SEEK GUARANTEES FROM OTHER
COUNTRIES. MINTOFF CONCLUDED BY SAYING HE WISHED TO SEE THE
DIVISION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES (GOVERNMENT AND OPPOSITION)
REDUCED SO THAT MALTA WOULD BE NON-ALIGNED AND NEUTRAL WITH
GUARANTEES FROM BOTH SIDES. END SUMMARY.

2. ON FEBRUARY 15 NATIONALIST (OPPOSITION) PARTY SHADOW MINISTER FOR COMMONWEALTH AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS, DR. VINCENT TABONE, PRESENTED THE OPPOSITION'S VIEWS ON MALTA'S FOREIGN POLICY. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS ACCOUNTS, TABONE BEGAN HIS COMMENTS BY APPEALING TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR A FULL SCALE DEBATE ON FOREIGN POLICY. HE CLAIMED THAT THE NATIONALISTS REPRESENTED "AT LEAST" HALF THE ELECTORATE AND ASSERTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION SHOULD TRY TO ACHIEVE CONSENSUS ON MALTA'S FOREIGN POLICY BEFORE ANY IRREVERSIBLE DECISIONS ARE TAKEN.

3. TABONE POINTED OUT THAT NATIONALISTS ARE NOT OPPOSED TO CLOSING DOWN THE BRITISH BASE AND DO NOT WANT MALTA TO BE USED AS A FOREIGN MILITARY BASE IN THE FUTURE. THIS POSITION WAS MADE CRYSTAL CLEAR IN THE PARTY'S 1976 ELECTORAL PROGRAM.

4. TABONE CALLED UPON THE GOVERNMENT TO CLARIFY THE TYPE OF NEUTRALITY IT WAS ADVOCATING FOR POST-1979 MALTA. THE NATIONALIST PARTY DID NOT AGREE WITH AN INDEFINITE COMMITMENT TO A VAGUELY DEFINED NEUTRALITY POLICY.

5. ACCORDING TO TABONE, THE NATIONALISTS ARE AGAINST MALTA BELONGING TO A MILITARY BLOC AND UNALTERABLY OPPOSED TO A BILATERAL MILITARY ALLIANCE WITH LIBYA OR SOME OTHER COUNTRY BECAUSE AN ALLIANCE BETWEEN "A SMALL NATION LIKE

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VALLET 00295 01 OF 02 211518Z

OURS AND A RELATIVELY POWERFUL ONE ALWAYS RESULTED IN THE SUBJUGATION OF THE FORMER BY THE LATTER." ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NATIONALISTS WOULD SUPPORT AN ARRANGEMENT BY WHICH COUNTRIES POWERFUL ENOUGH TO DETER POTENTIAL AGGRESSORS WOULD GUARANTEE MALTESE SECURITY. AMONG POSSIBLE GUARANTORS ARE THE UNITED STATES, BRITAIN, FRANCE, ITALY AND THE FRG. TABONE STATED THAT HE HOPED FRANCE AND ITALY WOULD GUARANTEE MALTESE SECURITY AS SUCH A GUARANTEE WOULD BE BACKED BY THE POWER OF THE NATO ALLIANCE; THE NATIONALISTS ARE PREPARED TO HELP TO GET SUCH A GUARANTEE. AFTER GUARANTEES WITH FRANCE AND ITALY HAD BEEN ARRANGED THERE WOULD BE "NO HARM IN ACQUIRING ADDITIONAL GUARANTEES FROM ALGERIA AND LIBYA" AS LONG AS THESE GUARANTEES DID NOT IMPLY A LOSS OF FREEDOM FOR MALTA OR GIVE THE GUARANTOR STATES THE RIGHT TO INTERVENE IN MALTESE INTERNAL AFFAIRS. MOREOVER, FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH LIBYA, A NEIGHBORING COUNTRY, ARE INDISPENSABLE TO THE POLICY OF ANY MALTES GOVERNMENT.

6. THE NATIONALISTS WANT MALTA TO RETAIN ITS TIES WITH THE COMMONWEALTH AND THE GROUP OF 77 AS THEY PROVIDE A FORUM WHERE MALTA CAN EXPRESS ITS VIEWS AND SEEK SUPPORT FOR ITS

PROPOSALS. TABONE WELCOMED THE IMPROVEMENTS IN THE AGREE-
MENT BETWEEN MALTA AND THE COMMON MARKET AND LOOKED FORWARD
TO A CLOSER LINK BETWEEN MALTA AND THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY.

7. PRIME MINISTER MINTOFF, IN RESPONSE TO TABONE'S
COMMENTS, SAID THAT HE UNDERSTOOD FROM TABONE'S SPEECH
THAT ANY MILITARY GUARANTEES SHOULD COME FROM THE US OR
FROM COUNTRIES TIED TO THE AMERICAN BLOC. TABONE DENIED
THIS, SAYING "IF ITALY AND FRANCE GAVE GUARANTEES THERE
WAS NOTHING WRONG IN HAVING GUARANTEES ALSO FROM LIBYA AND
ALGERIA." MINTOFF REPLIED BY ASSERTING THAT THIS MEANT
THAT IF ITALY AND FRANCE REFUSED TO GIVE MILITARY GUARAN-
TEES THEN THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOT GET THEM FROM LIBYA
AND ALGERIA OR ELSEWHERE, BUT THE FACT IS THAT ITALY AND
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 VALLET 00295 01 OF 02 211518Z

FRANCE HAVE NOT GIVEN THESE GUARANTEES AND THE GOVERNMENT
"HAS ALREADY GONE TO OTHERS TO GET THEM." MOREOVER, IF
THE GOVERNMENT TOLD ITALY AND FRANCE THEY WERE THE ONLY
ONES FROM WHOM IT WANTED GUARANTEES THEN THEY WOULD TREAT
MALTA THE SAME AS THE WEST HAD TREATED THE NATIONALISTS
WHO, WHEN THEY WANTED TO HAVE NATO IN MALTA, WERE REFUSED
NOT ONLY NATO MEMBERSHIP BUT EVEN OBSERVER STATUS.
THE MALTESE PEOPLE DO NOT SUPPORT THE OPPOSITION ON THIS
POINT AS WAS DEMONSTRATED IN THE LAST ELECTION. RATHER THE
PEOPLE HAD CHOSEN THE LABOR PROGRAM WHICH THE GOVERNMENT
WILL HONOR.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 VALLET 00295 02 OF 02 211522Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 TRSE-00 ACDA-12 LAB-04 IO-13 OMB-01 SIL-01
/102 W

-----107355 211553Z /45

R 211442Z FEB 78
FM AMEMBASSY VALLETTA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7981
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USNATO
USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IT

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VALLETTA 00295

8. MINTOFF ASSERTED THAT IF ITALY AND FRANCE WERE REFUSING TO GIVE THE GUARANTEES REQUESTED BY THE GOM THIS MEANT THAT THEY THOUGHT THE US "WANTED TO HAVE A BASE IN MALTA." THE GOM WILL NOT PERMIT THE SETTING UP OF SUCH A BASE, HOWEVER, AND IF THE AMERICANS TRY TO USE FORCE TO ACQUIRE ONE THEN THE MALTESE WERE READY TO "SHED THEIR BLOOD TO FIGHT THEM." THE OPPOSITION'S STAND HAD ALSO CONTRIBUTED TO THE UNFORTHCOMING ATTITUDE OF ITALY AND FRANCE TOWARD THE GUARANTEES. MINTOFF CALLED ON THE OPPOSITION TO TELL THE TWO COUNTRIES TO GIVE THE GUARANTEES THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS ASKING FOR AS "IT SEEMED THAT BOTH THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION SHARE THE SAME AIM BUT DIFFER ON THE QUESTION OF BALANCE; ONE VEERED TO ONE SIDE WHILE THE OTHER TO THE OTHER SIDE." THE BALANCE COULD BE FOUND ONLY IF BOTH PARTIES FAVORED GUARANTEES FROM BOTH SIDES.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 VALLET 00295 02 OF 02 211522Z

9. THE ARABS ARE AWARE THAT THE LABOR GOVERNMENT FAVORS NEUTRALITY WHICH "MEANS NON-ALIGNMENT WITH ANY SUPER-POWER" BUT WERE NOT YET CERTAIN THAT THE USA WOULD NOT ULTIMATELY "DO SOMETHING" TO DISRUPT THE PLAN. THE OPPOSITION WAS GIVING THE ARABS THIS IMPRESSION BY STATING THAT IF GUARANTEES WERE NOT FORTHCOMING FROM ITALY AND FRANCE THEY SHOULD NOT BE OBTAINED FROM ANYONE ELSE.

10. MINTOFF CONCLUDED BY SAYING HE WISHED TO SEE THE DIVISION BETWEEN THE TWO PARTIES REDUCED SO THAT MALTA WOULD BE NON-ALIGNED AND NEUTRAL WITH GUARANTEES FROM BOTH SIDES.

11. COMMENT: THE NATIONALISTS APPEAR TO BE TRIMMING THEIR SAILS SOMEWHAT ON THE ISSUE OF MALTESE NEUTRALITY. THEY SEEM TO BE SAYING THAT IF NEUTRALITY IS CLEARLY DEFINED IN A MANNER THAT PRESERVES MALTA'S INTERESTS, IS USED AS A MEANS TO ENHANCE MALTESE SECURITY AND IS STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY WESTERN EUROPE THEN THEY ARE PREPARED TO GO ALONG. AN INFLUENTIAL NATIONALIST MP SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD THE DCM THAT THE NATIONALIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE HAD DECIDED THAT THEY CAN SUPPORT A POLICY WHICH INSURED A EUROPEAN GUARANTEE INDEPENDENT OF ANY OTHER GUARANTEES

ARRANGED WITH THE ARABS BUT THAT A JOINT GUARANTEE INVOLVING THE APPROVAL OF BOTH EUROPEAN AND ARAB GUARANTORS BEFORE ANY ACTION ON MALTA'S BEHALF COULD BE TAKEN IS UNACCEPTABLE. THIS SHIFT PROBABLY REFLECTS THEIR CONCERN THAT MINTOFF MAY WELL SUCCEED IN OBTAINING SUPPORT FROM WESTERN EUROPE AND ACQUIESCENCE FROM THE US FOR HIS NEUTRALITY PROPOSALS. IF THIS SUPPORT INCLUDES FINANCIAL BENEFITS FOR MALTA, MINTOFF WILL HAVE DEMONSTRATED ONCE AGAIN HIS SKILL IN PROMOTING MALTESE NATIONAL INTERESTS. PRESUMABLY THE NATIONALISTS WISH TO BE IN A POSITION TO CLAIM THAT THEY, TOO, HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE REALIZATION OF THIS POLICY, CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 VALLET 00295 02 OF 02 211522Z

SHOULD MINTOFF SUCCEED.

12. WE ARE NOT SURE WHAT TO MAKE OF MINTOFF'S COMMENTS REGARDING THE US ROLE IN INFLUENCING THE ATTITUDE OF ITALY AND FRANCE TOWARD HIS NEUTRALITY POLICY. IT SEEMS UNLIKELY THAT HE ACTUALLY BELIEVES THAT THE US IS DISCOURAGING ITALY AND FRANCE FROM GIVING NEUTRALITY GUARANTEES BECAUSE THE US WANTS TO HAVE A BASE IN MALTA. THE BALANCE OF HIS REMARKS ABOUT MALTESE "SHEDDING THEIR BLOOD" TO RESIST THE USE OF FORCE BY THE US TO ACQUIRE ONE APPEARS TO BE PARLIAMENTARY GRANDSTANDING. NEVERTHELESS, HIS COMMENT ABOUT OUR ROLE VIS-A-VIS ITALY AND FRANCE AS WELL AS HIS REMARKS THAT THE ARABS WERE STILL NOT CERTAIN ABOUT THE US ATTITUDE TOWARD MALTA'S PROPOSED NEUTRALITY INDICATES THAT HE STILL HARBORS SOME SUSPICIONS ABOUT OUR POSITION. WE NOTE HOWEVER THAT HIS COMMENTS ON THIS POINT WERE COMPARATIVELY RESTRAINING AND WE ARE ALSO IMPRESSED BY HIS RELATIVELY CONCILIATORY TREATMENT OF THE NATIONALIST'S POSITION. LAINGEN

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INDEPENDENCE, DEBATES, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 21 feb 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978VALLET00295
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780078-0249
Format: TEL
From: VALLETTA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780231/aaaaazyc.tel
Line Count: 260
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 01c6b7d2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 VALLETTA 230
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 25 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3531223
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FOREIGN POLICY DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT CONTINUES
TAGS: PEPR, MT, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/01c6b7d2-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014